

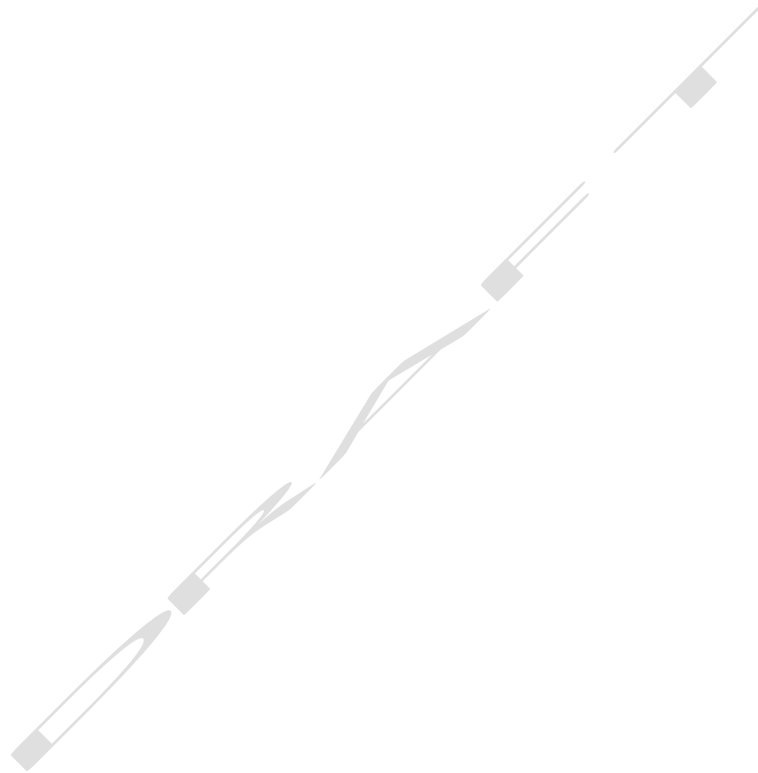


Comments, Compliments and Complaints

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1. Introduction

Harpenden Mencap is a not-for-profit charity providing a range of care, support and accommodation for people with learning disabilities. Our work is guided by the principles of personalisation and choice, therefore, we know how important it is to listen and learn from the people we support, their families and carers, our donors, supporters and members of the public.

Wherever it comes from, we use every compliment, comment and complaint to learn lessons and take the right action.

This policy exists to ensure that people know how to raise complaints, compliments or give us feedback and so that they can be confident about how these will be managed through to their conclusion. We also have an easy-read guide for the people we support on how to raise a formal complaint.

2. Definitions

This procedure relates to feedback, compliments and complaints as defined as:

Feedback: Naturally occurring information that is usually received verbally and informally. Feedback may be positive or negative, can be acted on immediately and is used to reflect/improve how we undertake our work.

Compliments: usually a more formal expression of thanks. Compliments may be shared verbally, through cards, letters or emails or through positive communications shared with others.

Complaints: a formal communication raising dissatisfaction with an activity or experience that have fallen short of expectations of the person making the complaint. Complaints are usually expressed formally by letter, email or telephone although we may talk to a person about raising a complaint if we feel this is appropriate following an informal conversation.

Feedback in the form of comments, compliments or complaints are extremely valuable as a means of informing and improving our work. We keep a log in each service and department to inform our learning.

Complaints usually require a much more structured process to be sure that necessary action is taken and that, where possible, those who raise complaints with us are satisfied with our methods and the outcomes achieved. As such the remainder of this policy relates to the process for managing complaints.

3. Approach

The relationships we hold with the people we support, their families, donors, supporters or members of the public are vital to us. As in all relationships it is natural for issues to arise and for people to want to raise their concerns when they do so. When this happens, we:

- Provide a formal process to be followed when issues are raised to ensure that we investigate them promptly and thoroughly;
- Treat each complaint equally regardless of who raises them and undertake a thorough investigation in every case;
- Keep a record of all the complaints we receive to provide us with insight into how people experience our activities and what we may need to improve;
- Fulfil all of our external reporting responsibilities regarding complaints and their outcomes;

- Link with our other internal processes such as safeguarding and disciplinary policies to ensure that necessary actions are followed when they are required;
- Ensure that all staff, volunteers and trustees are aware of their responsibilities under this policy.

Whilst responding to a complaint we ensure that:

- We are respectful of people's right to complain, open to the learning that comes as a result and we behave professionally throughout the process;
- We ensure that complaints and their outcomes cause no harm to our enduring relationships with the complainant, or (where applicable) the people we support;
- We know the importance of the relationships we hold and provide support for these before, during and after complaints are made;
- We recognise that people can feel anxious about making a complain or the process that follows and that professionalism, communication and reassurance are important;
- We ensure that we maintain an openness and accept responsibility when we get things wrong.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Chief Executive Officer (CEO): The CEO has overall responsibility for this policy.

Managers: Managers are responsible for ensuring that all staff understand this policy and that it is implemented effectively, fairly and in line with best practice.

Employees: - All staff are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of their obligations in respect of reporting complaints to managers.

5. Procedure

A complaint can be submitted in writing (by email or letter) or verbally (by phone or in person) to any manager within the organisation. We usually ask that a complaint is submitted to the manager closest to the issue of concern as this ensures that it is investigated locally with greater opportunity for a faster outcome.

When a complaint is raised it is logged to ensure that the issues are captured at the initial stage. We will confirm with the complainant at the earliest opportunity:

- What we will do;
- How long they can expect the process to take;
- How they would like to be contacted;
- What will happen in the event of any delays.

We will acknowledge all complaints within 3 working days by email or letter. We try to resolve complaints within 25 working days, ensuring that we maintain communication during this time and after if things take longer than planned.

Our complaint procedure contains three stages.

5.1. Stage 1

What is the purpose? At this stage complaints are managed by the manager closest to the issue with a view to ensuring that actions to resolve the concerns are taken promptly.

Who is responsible? The manager of the service or department.

What is the outcome? The complaint will either be resolved, or a review will be requested (stage 2). The manager will communicate the outcome of the complaint back to the complainant.

5.2. Stage 2

What is the purpose? Some complaints cannot be managed by the manager who is most local to the complaint and may need to be investigated at a more senior level.

Who is responsible? The Chief Executive Officer, Head of Finance and Operations or an independent external officer.

What is the outcome? The complaint will either be resolved, or a review will be requested (stage 2). The manager will communicate the outcome of the complaint back to the complainant.

5.3. Stage 3

What is the purpose? At this stage, if the complainant is dissatisfied with how their complaint has been managed, a review can be undertaken to ensure that the process has been followed correctly to reach a fair and reasonable outcome.

Who is responsible? A Trustee, second Senior Officer or an independent external officer.

How long will it take? We aim to complete the review within 25 working days of the complainant expressing their dissatisfaction with the management of the complaint. If this is not possible, the complainant will be notified and a new timescale will be agreed.

What is the outcome? The complainant will receive a written letter detailing the outcome of the review and whether Harpenden Mencap will take any further action.

6. Complaining to External Agencies

If a complainant still feels that Harpenden Mencap has not treated them fairly or done all we reasonably could, they have the right to take their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and ask for it to be reviewed.

We provide support to adults with learning disabilities that is subject to external regulation. Whilst these regulators do not have the powers to investigate or resolve complaints made to us, they do welcome concerns, feedback or compliments on the providers they regulate.

If a complaint has been made about our fundraising activities and the complainant is not happy with the response, they can complain to the Fundraising Regulator.

If the complaint is about how we handle personal information and the complainant is not happy with our response, or they believe that their data protection or privacy rights have been infringed, they can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office.

7. Appendix A – Contact Details

Harpden Mencap

Telephone: 01582 460055

Email: office@harpdenmencap.co.uk

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Website: www.lg.org.uk

Hertfordshire County Council

Telephone: 0300 123 4040

Website: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk

Care Quality Commission

Telephone: 03000 616 161

Website: www.cqc.org.uk/contact-us

The Fundraising Regulator

Telephone: 0300 999 3407

Website: www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/complaints

Information Commissioner's Office

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Website: www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint